

## BETTY'S PRINCESS

By TEMPLE BAILEY

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The Martha Washington was an hour behind time. On the pier at Old Bay was piled a waiting cargo—coops of restless chickens, watermelons whose dark green rinds proclaimed their inner lusciousness, barrels of vegetables and a disconsolate calf in a crate, which gave forth occasional complaining moans, protests against the strangeness of its position and its separation from its kind.

Betty sympathized with the calf. She, too, was lonely. The only other visible occupant of the pier was Pink Johnson. Pink was crabbing, and Betty wondered if it would be beneath the dignity of her position as a traveler if she went over and watched him until the boat came. On ordinary occasions she and Pink visited freely, but Pink had recognized an extraordinary event and with true negro instinct had kept his distance.

Before Betty decided, however, there appeared just above the horizon a faint streak of smoke, then a dark body, which, growing larger, proved to be the Martha Washington. She came along slowly, throwing up a crest of white water in front of her and leaving behind a broad road of dancing foam tipped waves.

As she steamed up to the wharf many hands were ready to receive the lines thrown to hold her fast, for ne-

groes of various ages and sizes rolled out from behind boxes and barrels, while from the ox carts on the shore descended lazy drivers, who lounged down to get the small stores which the boat would bring.

Pink Johnson was on his feet, winding up on his crab line. He threw the chicken end which had served for bait back into the water.

"Hi cert'nly do seem a pity to was' good bairds," was his reflection, "but I've got to hep Mis' Betty Ma'shall on to dat boat. seein' she ain' got no white folks dat'll do hit."

He went over and picked up Betty's satchel and lunchbox.

"Te waw'm fo' de cu'n, wasn' hit. Mis' Betty?" he questioned.

"Oh, yes, Pink. Grandfather couldn't come. Some gentlemen called, and he had to stay to talk over business."

Perhaps the "cun'" might have had the grace to blush over the excuse he had given had he heard the truthful words, but as he was at the moment engaged in compounding mint juleps for four "gentlemen" who had dropped in to discuss the merits of the new horse which was to be entered for the Pimlico races it is not likely that thoughts of lonely little Betty weighed him down.

Betty was not unhappy. This was the first great event of her life. How it had come about she hardly knew, but "Cousin Mary Marshall" was to be married, and Aunt Lella, Betty's dead mother's favorite sister, had written that the little girl was to come to the wedding.

So Dilsey, Betty's mammy, had packed Betty's simple white dresses and had promised to take good care of grandfather, and, with a kiss, Betty had started away in the old surrey. Upon her arrival at the wharf she had sent Calvin, the driver, home at once, that he might wait on the colonel's guests. Hence it happened that Pink Johnson was the only person to bid Miss Betty Marshall of the "Hall" goodbye when she started on her first trip from Old Bay.

To the man and woman, passengers from a famous watering place down the bay, who leaned over the rail lazily watching the loading and unloading of freight, the Martha Washington appeared merely an old tub of a boat, but in Betty's eyes it was glorified.

Betty knew every one on board, from Captain Warfield to the stewardess, for, while Captain Warfield was a Maryland man and the Marshalls were Virginians, still the captain's mother had married Colonel Marshall's third cousin, and if that does not constitute kinship nothing does, at least in the opinion of these clannish and warm-hearted southerners. As for the stewardess, she talked of Dilsey and Calvin in a tone which bespoke familiarity, while the unqualified respect with which she asked after Colonel Marshall showed the marks of certain pickaninnies days, when the colonel was "Marse Bob."

It was supper time before Betty finished exploring the boat. Betty had a place of honor near the captain, and she answered his questions and told him the news of her little community in the charming fashion and unconcernedness of self which are the inheritance of the well born child of the south.

The princess watched the eager, sweet face from the other side of the table. She was not really a princess, but that was the name Betty had given her when first she came on deck. She was tall and fair, and there was something about her gown which was different from anything Betty had ever seen. It was straight and plain and dark, but there was a dash of bright color in her silk blouse, and Betty thought it beautiful.

The gentleman with her, Betty called the prince. He was very handsome, but he looked tired, at least his did. The princess looked tired, or perhaps bored would be a better word, but Betty had not yet added to her vocabulary some words which the dreary experiences of matured life made necessary.

When they all went upstairs and on

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